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INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
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DEPARTMENT FOR DRL/IRF, DS/IP/AF, DS/IP/ITA, DS/OPO/FPD,
DS/ICI/CI AND AF/E
LONDON, PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/10/2017

TAGS: [PHUM KIRF](#) [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [ER](#)

SUBJECT: LGF MEMBER ARRESTED DURING ORTHODOX SERVICE

Classified By: RSO SEAN MCCLANAHAN FOR REASON 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: A local guard force (LGF) employee and a priest were picked up by the Eritrean Intelligence Service (ANS) during an Eritrean Orthodox church service on 10/07/07.

The priest was released the same day but the LGF employee continues to be held in jail incommunicado. While the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) has a history of arresting people attending non-approved church services, this detention is the first report in many years of an arrest during the service of a GSE-sanctioned religion. Post does not know the reason behind this arrest. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) On 10/07/07, a LGF member assigned to the embassy mobile patrol was picked up during a church service at St. Mary's Orthodox Church. Members of the Eritrean Intelligence Service (ANS) interrupted the service and arrested the LGF member and one of the priests. At the time of arrest, the church was conducting a weekly "Sunday school" bible study class and over 100 parishioners were present. The arrested LGF serves as one of the coordinators for the bible classes. The priest and the LGF member were taken to the Number 2 police station in Asmara. The priest was questioned about his biographical information and released. The LGF employee is still being held.

13. (C) Post's Foreign Service National Investigator (FSNI) has spoken with other guard force employees who had been attending the bible class. All stated that there was nothing unusual about this particular class and they were not sure why the LGF member had been arrested. FSNI told RSO that the arrested LGF member was not involved in any political activities and had already completed his national service. Both the FSNI and the LGF's family have been allowed to deliver food for the employee, but have not been allowed access to him. The Eritrean Police told the FSNI that they were not responsible for the employee's arrest; rather, the ANS had picked him up and told the police to hold him for "national security reasons."

14. (C) RSO Comment: This is the fourth LGF member to be detained by the GSE since June. Of the other three, two were picked up under suspicion of not having completed their national service and one was arrested during an "illegal" Protestant church service. Post does not know why this particular employee was arrested. FSNI will continue to monitor the case. End Comment.
MCINTYRE